

WHAT WE VALUE - PT#1

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INTRODUCTION

I am sure you will agree with me that we have worked through some very serious stuff in sermons this past half-year. Some folk are still trying to figure out all the implications. Just relax. God will lead you to where you need to be in relationship to him and fellow believers. Today, we simply do some reflexion. No deep challenges. Simply refreshing what we already are practicing.

In two weeks we start a new series on the Kingdom of God. Today and next Sunday we are leading up to that series by revisiting our Vineyard Values. So I am dealing today with part one of "**What we value**".

I deal with:

1. The Scriptures
2. The Holy Spirit
3. Grace and Mercy.

Our Values are the foundation upon which one builds a local Vineyard church. Values help us define our philosophy of ministry, emphasis, and model of ministry.

VALUE ONE – SCRIPTURE

Our first value is the Bible. In very simple terms it is the manufacturer's handbook.

SOME INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE

The Bible has been read by more people, translated into more languages and published in more countries than any other book in history. No book has been more bought or more banned, more loved or more loathed, more memorized or more spoken against (maligned) than the Bible.

Why was the Bible written? To reach all Generations, a written record was needed, one that would touch all people everywhere. The Bible was God's chosen vehicle. It would serve all people who were not present and did not see God's involvement in history, or the events surrounding Christ's incarnation, His death and resurrection, Pentecost – the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the church and the birth of the Church.

The Bible is one book consisting of 66 smaller books containing a continuous, coordinated, consistent story of God's plan of salvation. The English word Bible is from the Latin word "**biblia**", which means "books."

The Bible was written by more than 40 people who were inspired by God's Spirit to write. They came from all walks of life, from 13 different countries and three different continents but yet it all comes together as a literary masterpiece, with one central theme. That's a miracle, with a divine Author overseeing the whole thing! Those 40 persons came from a variety of backgrounds: doctors, fishermen, shepherds, soldiers, kings, princes, some were rich, some were poor, educated and uneducated.

INTERESTING TO NOTE:

- There were no chapter and verse divisions until around the year **A.D. 1214**, when **the books were divided into chapters** by an English priest Stephen Langton, who later became Archbishop of Canterbury. He did this when he was a teacher at the University of Paris in France.
- Over three hundred years later, **verses were given numbers** by French printer-scholar Robert Estienne to make Bible study easier.

WHY DO WE VALUE SCRIPTURE?

Listen to Paul's words written in Rome in 67AD.

2 Timothy 3:14-17 (NRSV)

*¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have known **the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.** ¹⁶ **All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,** ¹⁷ so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.*

NOTE: Paul was speaking about the Old Testament Scripture. The New Testament selection of 27 books was not yet completed. But carries the same authority.

Concerning the New Testament, in A.D. 367, Athanasius of Alexandria, considered the father of orthodoxy, gave us the earliest list of the New Testament books which is exactly like our present day list. A Church Council meeting in **Carthage** – called the **Synod of Hippo**, held in **A.D. 393**, representing the entire Christian Church of that century – **listed the 27 books of the New Testament as the official New Testament Scripture.** Their decision has stood the test of time.

The Bible, as God's Word written, is centrally about **what our glorious triune God has done to glorify himself by the redemption of his people, the judgment of sin, and making all things new in Christ.** For the church, such a message is good news, which ought to move us to faith, hope, love, and faithfulness to Christ.

Not only is the original text of Scripture inspired/authored by the Holy Spirit, in the **"here and now"** the Holy Spirit causes it to be **"living and active"**. The Holy Spirit takes the Word from **Logos** (written word) to **Rhema** (living word).

It is important for us to say that Scripture has authority above church councils and traditions, above reason, above experiences, and above personal viewpoints.

The Bible is our manufacturer's Handbook/manual for living the Kingdom life! It is important for us to be reading, studying, sharing God's Word, and so on.

VALUE TWO - CHRIST IS THE HEAD AND THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE CHURCH

When we look at Acts 13 we see **directional instruction** to the Church coming directly from the Holy Spirit.

Acts 13:1-4 (NKJV)

*¹ Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, **the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."** ³ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. ⁴ So, **being sent out by the Holy Spirit**, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.*

The Holy Spirit appears to be the "**operational manager**" of the Godhead. We believe with no uncertainty that the Holy Spirit is the **Administrator** and **Orchestrator** of the life of the Church on planet earth ever since the day of Pentecost.

To understand the role of the Holy Spirit in the Church we need first to look again at what Jesus taught about the specific activity of the Spirit in the life of a believer.

John 14:16-17 (NLT2)

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. ¹⁷ He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.

John 14:26 (NLT2)

*²⁶ But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—**he will teach you everything** and will remind you of everything I have told you.*

Jesus made it very clear that we need the operation of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

John 14:26 (NRSV)

*²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, **will teach you everything**, and **remind you** of all that I have said to you.*

From these verses we discover a number of things:

1. The Holy Spirit is our teacher, teaching us all things.
2. The Spirit is the living link between us and Father, for He will be in us, and we will know Him personally.
3. He will bring to our remembrance all that Jesus has taught us and give specific application of those words.

There are 168 hours in the week. Let us say you sleep 56 hours, that leaves 112 hours. If one attends church on a Sunday and a small group meeting during the week at which one receives teaching, that totals +5 hours, leaving 107 awake hours. **The Holy Spirit is our personal teacher for 107 hours a week.**

Are you aware of Him and are you listening?

I have often heard folk say something like, "The Holy Spirit is my teacher. I don't need anyone to teach me, that is why I don't go to church".

My question is this: "Why did Jesus give the teacher gift as one of the five-fold people gifts to equip His church for ministry if the teaching role was confined to the Holy Spirit?"

Simply because there is **no conflict** or **competition** between their work as teachers and the work of the Holy Spirit as our teacher. It is complementary in nature.

CHURCH DIVISION

Historically in the Church we have a division into two sections. One section believes that the signs, wonders and miracles reflected in the New Testament came to an end once the New Testament Apostles died or once Scripture was finalised in 393 A.D.

Then, there are many **Pentecostal and Charismatic denominations**, which includes Churches like **Vineyard** and many others, that state that **we are still living in times of renewal and revival, signs, wonders and miracles.**

JESUS AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus relied on the Holy Spirit in order to fulfill His ministry here on earth. Jesus lived in dependence on the Holy Spirit and taught His disciples to do the same. As the disciples did so they were over-joyed at the results of their own ministering, for God worked through them the same miracles that were evident in Jesus' ministry. They, too, cast out demons and healed the sick, and preached the message of the kingdom with boldness, with similar results to what Jesus had.

As a Vineyard Church we believe that we, as we submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit, will experience exactly what those early disciples did.

Irrespective of culture, nationality, language, etc, we as believers can be successful in ministry if we allow, as Jesus did, the Holy Spirit to equip and empower us.

THE KINGDOM IS POWER NOT TALK.

Paul, writing to the Corinthian Church made a statement that I find we ought to give attention to. He said to them:

1 Corinthians 4:20 (NLT2)

²⁰ *For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; **it is living by God's power***

That's quite a statement.

I wonder if we are free to be able to say that if anyone peeked into our personal lives, they would discover that we are full of the power of the Lord and not simply giving lip service to the Gospel.

We cannot escape the thought that we need to be experiencing the super -abundant working of the Holy Spirit in our midst. Each one of us ought to be realizing the power of God in Christ in our lives. Without His power our Christian life is not only powerless, but also lacks depth and vitality.

To use John Wimber's language, we are seeking a '*lifestyle of relationship with God*', a '*renewal of spirituality*'. This makes response to Holy Spirit and intimacy with God our Fundamental Value.

VALUE THREE - GRACE AND MERCY

Every time I see those two words together I am reminded of the two puppy dogs that follow us around every day of our lives.

And your response is, "What is he talking about". Well turn to Psalm 23 and read verse 6a.

Psalm 23:6 (NKJV)

⁶ *Surely **goodness (grace)** and **mercy** shall follow me all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.*

It does not matter what we are facing in life, we just need to look down, and see the two puppies, Grace and Mercy at our ankles. God's incredible love for us.

At our staff meeting on Monday Tony shared this statement:

**Grace is receiving what I don't deserve;
Mercy is not receiving what I do deserve.**

GRACE (Charis):

Grace has many facets.

- Many have used an acronym of the word 'GRACE' to define what it is. And so they say, "Grace is **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**".
- One of the best-known definitions of grace is only three words: **God's unmerited favour**.
- A.W. Tozer expanded on that idea by saying, "**Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines him to bestow benefits on the undeserving.**"
- Professor Berkhof is more to the point when he says' "**grace is the unmerited operation of God in the heart of man, effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit**".

Ephesians 2:8 NIV

*For it is **by grace** you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, **it is the gift of God.***

Being saved by God is a work of God in His amazing love for us. It is a gift. You don't earn or pay for a gift given you.

God's grace is huge, far more than we can imagine, we cannot grasp the limitlessness of it – but we can choose to live our life being thankful for God's wonderful kindness, undeserved mercy, and extravagant love; which He demonstrated through the ultimate sacrifice of His Son for us. This is Grace!

Romans 5:8 (NLT2)

⁸ But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Furthermore, God **demonstrates Grace** through the daily life of the believer because salvation is not just a once-in-a-lifetime event; Grace is demonstrated continuously in our life as we make the choice to live for Him every day.

In addition God assists us to make these choices through the wonderful gift of His Holy Spirit who is living in us to strengthen us, to encourage us and to support us.

God loves the real me, and He knows all of me and still His grace is demonstrated through me, even when I mess up badly!

1 John 2:1-2 (NIV)

1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

God is for us, and He wants to deal with weakness in our life by his grace.

MERCY (chêsêd):

I repeat Tony's statement:

**Grace is receiving what I don't deserve;
Mercy is not receiving what I do deserve.**

God's mercy means **His pity, favour, compassion, and loving-kindness toward people.**

As a Vineyard Church we value the MERCY OF GOD. We believe that mercy is fundamental to all that God does in salvation. We, therefore, aim to extend mercy to one another and to all to whom we minister.

John Wimber:

'Ours is neither to make names for ourselves nor to build lasting institutions, but to meet the needs of broken people through a ministry of mercy in our lifetime'.

John Wimber challenged **all Vineyard members** to become agents of grace and mercy.

Grace and mercy means:

- being patient with people's quirks.
- helping anyone around you who is hurting.
- doing good to those who hurt you.
- giving people a second chance.
- being kind to those who offend you.
- building bridges of love to the unpopular.
- valuing relationships over rules.
- that in our church 'It's OK to fail', make mistakes and learn from them
- being committed to non-manipulation, not attempting to play God for others.

The mercy of God flowing through us enables us to minister to the sick, elderly, shut-ins, retarded, the handicapped, the mentally ill, the homeless, the hungry, the unemployed, the hurting, and the needy in practical and compassionate ways.

By grace and mercy we cultivate a climate of love, acceptance and forgiveness in our church, often accepting those whom others have rejected. Including the acceptance of broken people as part of the lifestyle of our small groups so that it becomes part of the grass roots experience of our people.

Every Christian is expected to be merciful. This is **a role** that reflects the fruit of the Spirit. It is a lifestyle, a basic value.

Jesus taught about the ministry of mercy.

Matthew 5:7

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

As God's children we are given power and authority and the Holy Spirit to fulfil the task of continuing the work of Jesus here on earth.

Note: We don't minister out of law and legalism, coercion or manipulation. We minister out of relationship and gratitude – out of the grace and mercy we have received.

This also means that we minister as co-workers with God. That helps us keep in mind that it is the power and presence of the Holy Spirit who makes the sign, wonder or miracle happen. Also, that the works that take place are what God has authorised.

CONCLUSION

As a Vineyard Church we place high value on:

- 1. The Scriptures**
- 2. The Holy Spirit**
- 3. Grace and Mercy.**